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BOSTON UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE SCHOOL

Thesis

THE JEWISH MOTIVES IN HEINE'S WORKS

by

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THE JEWISH MOTIVES IN HEINE'S WORKS

I. Introduction

A. Purpose. The purpose of this thesis is to examine Heine in the light of the Jewish motives in his writings. However, this is not so much a critical study and an attempt at appraisal, as it is an effort to appreciate and to understand the poet. We are not so much interested here in knowing what he did and said as we are in trying to find out the influences that moulded him and the ideas that moved him.

With this as our main objective, a study and analysis of the Jewish element in his works is not only of immense value, but hardly to be dispensed with. It is of value in that it affords us a keener insight into the innermost recesses of the poet's character; and it is indispensable, since appreciations of the poet from various other aspects have proved of but little success. An examination of the controversial nature of the voluminous critical material that has accumulated about Heine tests the truth of the foregoing statement.

Indeed so radically opposed to each other are the critics in their opinions of the poet, and so varied are their conclusions about him, that there are hardly any neutrals. Instead, we find them divided into two hostile camps -- that of wholesale praise and that of wholesale condemnation.

Such criticism, however, is of little value in so far as an understanding of the complexity of the poet's nature is concerned. On the contrary, it makes it even more difficult for the student of Heine to decide for himself as to what Heine really was. For, out of this wholesale praise and condemnation, there emerges not a single complete portrait of the poet but rather a number of different pictures or caricatures. Consequently, we see on the one hand Heine the cynic, the scoundrel, the blackguard, the Mephistopheles and the bitter foe of Germany, while on the other hand -- Heine the prophet, the idealist, the champion of liberty and what not. Such hazy and half distorted portraits are of course true to some extent, but by no means tell the whole truth.

The reasons for such general confusion and misunderstanding are not hard to find. It is first of all due to the literary and racial bias that have made their way into the literary history of Germany by men like Treitschke, Menzel and their clique, all bigoted men who could not forgive Heine his outspoken liberal views and above all his Jewish origin. To them, the strongholds of German imperialism and chauvinism, Heine was the source of all evil, and the greatest enemy of Germany.

Treitschke, for example, gives a pretty full catalogue of his crimes: "To a nation, which for centuries had pos-

sessed no political history, nothing was more foreign than the historical sense. The filial piety of the Germans seemed to it ridiculous."¹

In a similar tone we behold the more recent Bartels rejecting Heine from German literature. He says: "Dem Dichter Heine muss man geben was ihn gebührt, aber jeden Anspruch auf Deutschtum, den man in seinen Namen erhebt, streng abweisen vielmehr ihn als den Verwüster des deutschen Gewissens hinstellen der er in der Tat gewesen ist."²

Both Treitschke and Bartels as literary historians of Germany deny Heine a place in the national literary history of Germany on no other ground than that he was a Jew. Treitschke at least pretends to be more or less objective in granting the poet some grudging praise; the more modern Bartels, however, does not even try to conceal his hatred for Heine, and for the entire Jewish race.

Another even greater source of confusion in regard to Heine, to put it in Untermeyer's own words, is that so many of the biographers and literary critics have taken him at his own valuation.³ It is against such a method of procedure that we are warned by Untermeyer, if we wish to get a correct estimate of the poet. Heine was so inconsistent and so self-contradictory, that an estimate of

1. Atkins, p. 250.

2. Bartels, p. 110.

3. Untermeyer, p. VI.

him on the basis of mere isolated and detached utterances or even complete poems would prove both superficial and incorrect.

But this is just what actually happened. The very complexity and many-sidedness of the poet has indeed proved the greatest source of confusion and misunderstanding. For each biographer and each critic, in his turn starting with a fixed idea in mind, could easily read into the poet just what he was after. So that to the one interested in his idealism he appeared an idealist and nothing but that, while to the other stressing the cynicism of the poet, he appeared above all a cynic.

Estimates of this sort are true as far as they go, but they do not go far enough. For in overstressing one phase of the poet they tend to neglect all other sides. At best they can show us mere fragments of his character, mere fleeting moods, mere glimpses into his nature; but they are hardly to be considered complete accounts of his life and character.

In order to understand the poet more fully, we need some evaluation that would link together all these loose and detached fragments into one unified portrait; we need some synthesis which should embrace all these separate parts and link them into one unified whole, and thus present the poet as a living figure. This, it seems to me,

can be brought about best by viewing Heine in the light of the Jewish motives which pervade all of his writings.

It is to these that we must turn not alone for a fuller appreciation of Heine the Man, but especially of the various forces that combined in moulding and producing this personality, so puzzling and so complex. For, it is in these that he is mirrored in all his complexity; in his sympathies and antipathies; in his love and hate; in his joy and suffering; in his hope and despair. This includes his anecdotes, his gossip and trivialities, whereby we can see him in his most natural color.

These again reveal a great deal of his life which we fail to get in his works of a more general character, for while he generally appears disguised under a mask, he is in his Jewish themes more direct, more sincere and more outspoken.

Whatever we might say about Heine, be it in praise or condemnation, one thing must be borne in mind constantly; Heine was first and last a Jew, and this is the key to the secret of his puzzling personality. All of his writings are replete with Jewish motives -- even those that are essentially of a non-Jewish character. They pervade everything. Every chapter, every page of his careless and often bantering letters, every line of his direct and intimate poetry is permeated with the Jewish spirit; and this only

goes to show what a strong affinity the poet had for his race.

The very love for the Bible, the very love for the Talmudic lore, the constant mention of the Jordan and of the palm, the biblical allusions, show how great a force he derived from his heritage and how akin he felt to his people.

Matthew Arnold says: "No account of Heine is complete which does not include the Jewish element in him. His race he treated with the same freedom with which he treated everything else, but he derived a great force from it."⁴

But not only was his race the cause of his greatness; it was also the origin of his tragedy. Heine was, it be remembered, a sensitive Jew in a savagely anti-Semitic Germany. He was still a child, when he first learned that "Jew" and "Pariah" were in Germany of his day almost synonymous terms; and before he had outgrown his boyhood he had come to suffer that bitter heart-complaint of his race which is the most pathetic and most terrible of all national sorrows.

Already in his early life he was made to feel that he did not belong anywhere. By nature sensitive and proud, he was unable to adjust himself to his environment. He was not at home either as a child in a French Catholic Lyceum, or as student in the various German Universities. Every-

4. Arnold, p. 137.

where he was made conscious of his Jewish origin and as such, a man without a home. At best he was a spectator rather than a participant in life.

As a Jew, his place was within the gloomy walls of the dirty Ghetto, together with the rest of his humiliated and degraded brethren; but there again he felt an outsider and a stranger. He was too proud by nature to allow himself to be degraded and despised. To him, the born poet, with his keen aesthetic sense, ever sensitive to all beauties of life, such a life of filth and misery could only arouse a feeling of disgust and antipathy. To him the sensuous and pleasure loving Oriental, the pleasures and joys of the world outside of the Ghetto were much more inviting than the ascetic and rigid life of the Ghetto. Thus he was forced to escape from the Ghetto, from his people and from himself. But since the world outside of the Ghetto would not accept him, he had to find some other world of refuge; and this he created out of his own imagination.

We thus find the poet occasionally withdrawing from the real world into an imaginary world; so that when still a child we find him occasionally in the attic room of the house of his uncle Von Gelderlen, or "Noah's Ark" as the poet himself calls it. In this highly fantastic world, he finds a great deal of comfort for his aching soul in reading Don Quixote, Sterne's Sentimental Journey, Gulliver's

Travels and many other adventurous and romantic stories. When not in the attic room, he was lying on his back and listening to the stories told him by the drummer of Napoleon whom he later glorified in his book of "Ideen." Later in life he creates for himself a new world of fantasy; for he cannot get along without it. He must have some form of relief from the constant struggles and disappointments, and this he discovers in the realm of the Olympian Gods. In order to escape from himself Heine imagines himself a Greek, who is to him the symbol of external beauty, the symbol of harmony and sensuous pleasure.

Yet, significantly, he was never able to stay for any great length of time in that world of fantasy. Inexorably, he felt himself dragged back to reality only to meet with new disappointments. He was too much shackled to his race to be able to escape from it for long; ever he tries to escape from it, but is compelled to return to it again. From the very height of Olympus he is dragged down to the gloomy and filthy streets of the Ghetto, and to the unpleasant realities of life. Such was the background of Heine's life, and one can easily imagine the tragic effect it had upon him. For in addition to the conflict between himself and his environment there

now arose a new inner conflict between Hellenism and Judaism, and this is the source of his lifelong tragedy.

Heine tried all his life to bring harmony between the various forces that played their part in him; and this he was unable to do, because all of these were too strongly opposed to each other and he too weak to harmonize them. In him East meets West, the Orient clashes with the Occident; nay, more, in him Jerusalem, Athens, Berlin and Paris struggle for supremacy, and all these only bring about a dissonance in his life.

Always disappointed and disillusioned, always thwarted and frustrated by inner and outer inhibitions, in his attempts to adjust himself to life, Heine's first reaction was to escape into a dream world, but since this was only a temporary escape, his second reaction was to stand up and fight; and this he certainly did as no other man before him did. Hypersensitive to the point of morbidity, embittered and torn with unanswered doubts, wrestling with despair, he became sarcastic, extremely biting and satirical, and with sarcasm as his weapon he stands up to fight his battle for himself, for his people and for humanity as a whole.

This, it seems to me, is the key to the secret of his personality; this accounts for his seeming hatred for Ger-

many and her institutions; this accounts for his antagonistic attitude towards all state religions including his own Jewish religion, and in short for all seeming contradictions and inconsistencies. There is only one answer for all these: Heine was a Jew in a Jew-hating Germany, and this meant lifelong suffering; what came as a result of this is best revealed in the Jewish motives that pervade all his works.

II. Body. Discussion of the Jewish motives and subdivision into three classes.

Inasmuch as the Jewish motives reflect for the most part the inner feeling of Heine in his various moods, it is important that we classify them, for the sake of coherence, into three main classes that would coincide with the three chief stages of his development.

A. Motives of the first period, 1817-1828. The Jewish motives underlying the writings of this period may be characterized as the outcome of Heine's Judenschmerz. This period marks the awakening of the Jewish national consciousness of the poet, and most of the literary productions of that time betray his feeling of racial solidarity with his people.

1. Belsazer. "Belsazer" is one of the earliest literary achievements of the poet and goes back to the year 1820. It is a Biblical motive, based on the fifth chapter of "Daniel," and is with but a few poetic changes almost entirely a literal translation of the original Hebrew. The poem is of extraordinary poetic power and sincerity. The personal element so common in all of Heine's writings, is here entirely missing, as is also true of most of his Jewish themes. The entire poem is permeated with a feeling of awe and reverence for the all powerful God of Israel.

Byron's "Vision of Belshazzar" is said to have inspired Heine to this poem. But Heine himself, according to Karpeles⁵ attributed it to the account of the downfall of Belshazzar given in the Hagada⁶ which he read for the first time at the Passover ceremony in Frankfort. Heine was very much impressed by this ceremony, a very vivid and most picturesque account of which he gives us later in the first chapter of his "Rabbi von Bacharach."

2. Almansor. The tragedy "Almansor" was written during the years 1820 and 1821, and is an outcome of Heine's sad experiences as a Jew. The deplorable state of the Jews in the Ghetto, the Hamburger Judenkrawall of 1819, the unhappy ending of his love with Amalie, and his rejection by the Burschenschaften at the Universities of Bonn and Göttingen, all combine in making his life miserable and set his heart aglow with pain and vexation.

Thus in "Almansor," Heine voices a loud and vigorous protest against the maltreatment of the Jews at the hand of Christian Germany. The whole play is full of biting sarcasm, and in a tone seething with rage and bursting all bonds of social restraint he calls out like Shylock: "Ich seh den spanischen Hund! Dort spuckt er meinem Bruder in den Bart."⁷

5. Werke, Vol. 1, p. 65.

6. Hagada is a book read on Passover eve which gives an account of the Exodus of Egypt and many other experiences of the Jews.

7. Werke, Vol. 2, p. 48.

Nor does he spare the baptized Jews for going over to Christianity and betraying their own race. To the converts he says sarcastically:

"Pest-["]Örten gleich,
Flieh jenes Haus, wo neuer Glaube keimt.
Dort zieht man dir mit süssen Zangentönen
Aus tiefer Brust hervor das alte Herz
Und legt dir eine Schlang' dafür hinein.
Dort giesst man dir Bleitropfen, hell und heiss,
Aufs arme Haupt, dass nimmermehr dein Hirn
Gesunden kann vom wilden Wahnsinnschmerz.
Dorten vertauscht man dir den alten Namen,
Und giebt dir einen neu'n, damit dein Engel,
Wenn er dich warnend ruft beim alten Namen,
Vergeblich rufe."⁸

The action of the play goes back to the period of the conquest of Granada in 1492, and the expulsion of the Moors. The plot centers around the brave young Moorish prince, Almansor, who has fled from the country rather than become an apostate. Later he returns to Granada to find his beloved Zuleima as Donna Clara and the bride of a Christian. On her wedding day he carries her off after a bloody fight, and flees to the hills, but surrounded by pursuers, leaps with her to death rather than surrender to his enemies.

8. Werke, Vol. 2, p. 13.

The whole drama is a crude melodramatic affair full of murder, madness and unbridled passion; but that was just why Heine delighted in working on it, as he expressed himself in his letters to his friends. That is just why he considered it better than his poems. Almansor, the young Moor, was in reality himself; and the cruel Spanish Christians were none other than his own German persecutors. In every line of the play he gives expression to his own pent-up bitterness, as he himself expressed it in a letter to Steinmann, written October 29, 1820:

"In die s es Stü ck habe ich mein eigenes Selbst hinein-
geworfen, mitsamt meinen Paradoxen, meiner Weisheit, meiner
Liebe, meinem Hasse, und meiner ganzen Verrücktheit."⁹

Again on April 10, 1823, he writes to Steinmann:
"Meine Tragödien haben eben die Presse verlassen. Ich
weiss, man wird sie sehr herunterreissen. Aber ich will
Dir im Vertrauen gestehen: sie sind sehr gut, besser als
meine Gedichtesammlung, die keinen Schuss Pulver wert ist."¹⁰

For years after the publication of "Almansor" we still hear Heine referring to it in his letters to his friends. But it is hardly to be wondered at, for, as Atkins points out "at that time Heine felt himself a champion of Judaism and it was a grievance with him that others did not recognize the position he had taken up, and the risks he had run

9. Werke, Vol. 8, p. 338.

10. Werke, Vol. 8, p. 363.

in throwing down the gauntlet thus openly."¹¹

3. Über Polen. "Über Polen" was written in the year 1822. Although it is largely an essay on political and economic conditions of Poland, it is nevertheless of importance to us in that it reflects again Heine's Jewish national spirit and his racial solidarity. A great part of this treatise is devoted towards an exposition of the deplorable state of the Jews in Poland which he saw on his visit to Poland.

There he saw the compact masses of Israel, the hordes of long-coated Jews and bedraggled Jewesses swarming in the filthy towns and villages. Yet he was not repelled by the sight. Somehow he felt that just these hopeless, downtrodden, uncouth wretches would ultimately deliver his whole race. He sensed in them a quality which made them far more to his liking than the well fed and sleek Jews in Germany. He felt a profound kinship with them, for they too sang out of the depths of their pain, and they too dreamed amidst humiliation. So he writes: "Dennoch trotz der barbarischen Pelzmütze, die seinen Kopf bedeckt, und der noch barbarischeren Ideen, die denselben füllen, schätze ich den polnischen Juden weit höher als so manchen deutschen Juden, der seinen Bolivar auf dem Kopf und seinen Jean Paul im Kopfe trägt.....Der polnische Jude mit seinem schmutzigen

11. Atkins, p. 52.

Pelze, mit seinem bevölkerten Barte und Knoblauchgeruch und Gemauschel ist mir noch immer lieber, als mancher in all' seiner Staatspapierenen Herrlichkeit."¹²

The significant thing about the entire essay is that it shows the deep feeling of sympathy with the poor Polish Jews that Heine cherishes in his heart because, as he expresses himself, he sees in them the embodiment of the Jewish glorious past. On the other hand he has no use for the assimilated Jews of Germany just because they lack the feeling of racial solidarity, and just because this glorious past is of no consequence to them. The Polish Jews at least had some great cause to suffer for; they had the "idea" to strive for. Not so the reformed Jews of Germany; they had no philosophy and no idea behind it all. Heine could see in this movement only a stepping stone towards Christianity, and this he could not forgive them.

4. Heine's Letters from Berlin. In his "letters from Berlin" this very question of reformed Judaism seems to be the central theme. There is hardly a letter of that time in which he does not ridicule these fattened reformed Jews, or as he calls them the firm of "Gott, Christus und Co." But most characteristic of all these letters is that written to Wohlwill¹³ the first of April, 1823, since it especially shows how fully conscious of his Jewish nationali-

12. Werke, Vol. 8, p. 71.

13. Werke, Vol. 8, p. 359.

ty Heine was. He says: "Einige Hühneraugenoperateurs haben den Körper des Judentums von seinem fatalen Hautgeschwür durch Aderlass zu heilen gesucht, und durch ihre Ungeschicklichkeit und spinnwebig Vernunftbandagen muss Israel verbluten.....Wir haben nicht mehr die Kraft, einen Bart zu tragen, zu fasten, zu hassen, und aus Hass zu dulden: das ist das Motiv unserer Reformation.....Andere wollen ein evangelisches Christentümchen unter jüdischer Firma, und machen sich ein Talles¹⁴ aus der Wolle des Lamm-Gottes, machen sich ein Wams aus den Federn der heiligen Geisttaube und Unterhosen aus christlicher Liebe, und sie fallieren, und die Nachkommenschaft schreibt sich: 'Gott, Christus und Co.'"¹⁵

Heine is so bitingly sarcastic in this letter that at the end he apologizes for his sarcasm; but we can easily understand his bitterness. He was now in his national mood, and the reform-movement ideology could only arouse in him a feeling of disgust and repugnance.

5. Affiliation with the Verein für Kultur und Wissenschaft der Juden. The visit to Poland and his personal contact with the wretched condition of the Jews in Poland is undoubtedly responsible to a large extent for Heine's active participation in the work of the Verein für Kultur und Wissenschaft

14. Talles -- a praying mantle used in the synagogue during the prayers.

15. Werke, Vol. 8, p. 359.

der Juden. For as soon as he returned to Berlin, he threw himself into the work of the Verein with all his energy. He became secretary of the organization, taught Jewish history in the school conducted by the Verein and tried to conjure up ways of intensifying the Jewish spirit in the houses of his pupils.

The purpose of this society was to give to the Jews that understanding of their religion and knowledge of their history which would make them once more a noble, proud and godly people. At the head of this renaissance movement were such great Jewish men as Ludwig Marcus, Eduard Gans, Leopold Zunz and Moses Moser, all of whom, and especially the latter, have played an important part in bringing about the awakening of the dormant Jew in Heine, and to whom Heine's most interesting letters are addressed.

It is therefore not surprising to see Heine so enthusiastic over his work in the Verein. Here he seemed to have found that great peace for his harassed and wandering soul. Here for once he was not an outsider as he was made to feel in the Burschenschaften at Bonn and Göttingen. Here he could remove his mask and cease to pose, for he was among his own; among those who were most akin to his spirit; to his convictions and to his whole being. Moreover, through this Verein he hoped to bring relief to his despised brethren and thereby relieve himself of his own personal grief.

6. Donna Clara. This romance was written in November, 1823, and is of a very ironical and highly personal character. It bears a striking resemblance in spirit and tone to the earlier biting satire "Almansor." Like the latter, this too, is a protest against the at that time existing prejudices against the Jews for no reason other than their origin.

In a very humorous and amusing tone Heine tells us how the anti-Semitic Alkadentochter falls in love with the son of Rabbi Israel of Saragossa, not knowing that he is a Jew. Taking him for a Christian knight, she keeps on assuring him that her love for him is as genuine and as sincere as her hatred for the dirty Jews. Finally after an evening of passionate embraces and kisses, he tells her that he is the son of a Jewish Rabbi.

In a letter to Moser, Heine says: "Das ganze der Romanze ist eine Szene aus meinem eigenen Leben, bloss der Tiergarten wurde in den Garten des Alkalden verwandelt, Baronesse in Senora, und ich selbst in einen heiligen Georgen oder gar Apoll; es ist bloss das erste Stück einer Trilogie, wovon das zweite, den Helden von seinem eigenen Kinde, das ihn nicht kennt, verspottet zeigt, und das dritte zeigt dieses Kind als erwachsenen Dominikaner, der seine jüdischen Brüder zu Tode foltern lässt."¹⁶

The significant thing about this poem is that under a

veil of irony, Heine hides his inner feeling of sadness and melancholy, which is so characteristic of the poet. But that which is hidden in the poem, Heine tells us clearly in a letter to Robert: "Es sollte wahrlich kein Lachen erregen, noch viel weniger eine mokante Tendenz zeigen. Etwas, das ein individuell Geschehenes und zugleich ein Allgemeines, ein Weltgeschichtliches ist, und das sich klar in mir abspiegelte, wollte ich einfach, absichtlos und episch-parteilos zurückgeben im Gedichte; und das ganze hatte ich ernst-wehmüthig, und nichtlachend, aufgefasst, und es sollte sogar das erste Stück einer tragischen Trilogie sein."¹⁷

7. Ein Fichtenbaum steht Einsam. This poem was written in 1823, and is highly characteristic of the Jewish national mood of the poet at the time. It is one of the most genuine and most spontaneous expressions of the poet's everlasting longing for Palestine. Moreover, in personifying the Fichtenbaum and the Palme and imbuing them with human emotions, Heine thus gives utterance to his inner feeling of Zerrissenheit amidst the incompatible forces -- the Occident and the Orient that were constantly raging in him.

The poem is based upon an oriental legend told in the Midrash¹⁸; and this is one of the many instances which show the poet's strong affinity for the Biblical and Rabbinic lore.

17. Werke, Vol. 8, p. 400.

18. Werke, Vol. 1, Footnote on p. 128.

8. Im Hafen. This poem was written in 1826, and serves as another characteristic specimen of Heine's longing for Palestine. Although less spontaneous and of a rather frivolous nature, it is nevertheless similar in tone and feeling to the Fichtenbaum. For underneath this very superficial frivolity and gaiety, there lies a feeling of melancholy and sadness betraying the inner mood of the poet.

The Oriental in Heine, the Jew in him, can never free himself from the glamour that the Orient cast over him. The constant reference to the palm, to the Jordan, and other Biblical places and names well illustrate how much he was fascinated by them. And as Sharp pointed out that by the water of the Seine, Heine parodies the songs of Israel¹⁹, so also in this poem, from the wine cellar of Bremen, he carries us over into Palestine and places us under the palms of Beth-El and amidst the lilies of the Sharon.

Thus in the familiar tone of the "Song of Songs," Heine calls out:

"O, wie schön! Wie schön bist du Geliebte!

Du bist wie eine Rose!

Nicht wie die Rose von Schiras,

Die Hafis-besungene Nachtigallbraut!

Nicht wie die Rose von Saron,

19. Sharp, p. 13.

Die heiligrote, Prophetengefeierte; --

Du bist wie die Ros' im Ratskeller zu Bremen."²⁰

Then again:

"Hallelujah! Wie lieblich umwehen mich

Die Palmen von Beth-El!

Wie duften die Myrrhen von Hebron!

Wie rauscht der Jordan und taumelt vor Freude."²¹

9. Rabbi von Bacharach. This uncompleted Ghetto novel is one of the most conscious outcomes of Heine's Judenschmerz. It is not only one of the finest of his prose writings but also one of the most powerful and most picturesque of all of his literary products. Heine began this novel in 1823, at the time he was most enthusiastically interested in the Jewish cause, and in Jewish history and antiquities. At that time Heine was very active in the Verein für Kultur und Wissenschaft der Juden, and his close contact with Moser and the rest of the founders of this organization is undoubtedly in a large measure responsible for this epic.

Unfortunately, however, only three chapters of this novel have been preserved, the rest having perished in a fire in his mother's house. Heine himself placed great hopes in this narrative, and he intended it to be a book

20. Werke, Vol. 1, p. 246.

21. Werke, Vol. 1, p. 247.

on the historic past and the tribulations of his people that should stand as a monument for the generations to come. In preparation for this work, he studied with great zeal and enthusiasm sources and authorities on Jewish history and rabbinic lore; and he carried the idea of writing the novel with great love in his heart, as he expressed himself in a letter of the twenty-fifth of October, 1824, to Moser: "Mit unsäglichlicher Liebe trage ich das ganze Werk in der Brust."²²

Indeed, it was only out of his love for the theme that he devoted himself to the romance. The Jewish nature of the work would, he realized, arouse intense hostility among the anti-Semites; but he was not deterred. He felt he could no longer repress the resentment that seethed in him, the turbulent resentment of a sensitive Jew humiliated by a Christian world.

He thus found great relief in plotting the "Rabbi" as he expressed himself in the same letter: "Es ist ja doch ganz aus der Liebe hervorgehend, nicht aus eitel Ruhmgier. Im Gegenteil, wenn ich der Stimme der ausseren Klugheit Gehör geben wollte, so würde ich es gar nicht schreiben. Ich sehe voraus, wieviel ich dadurch verschütte und Feindseliges herbeirufe. Aber eben auch, weil es aus der Liebe hervorgeht, wird es ein unsterbliches Buch werden, eine ewige Lampe im Dome Gottes, kein verpasselndes Theaterlicht."²³

22. Werke, Vol. 8, p. 426.

23. Werke, Vol. 8, p. 426.



Then again: "Ich bitte nur Gott, mir gesunde Stunden zu geben, es ruhig niederzuschreiben."²⁴

The story goes back to the fifteen century and centers around the Rabbi von Bacharach, a cultured Jew, who returns from Spain to his native land to aid and uplift his oppressed brethren. He is celebrating the Passover in the hall of his dwelling, when he sees two strangers, who have joined them in the ceremony, throw the body of a child beneath the table. Realizing at once that these are gentiles, who are planning to trump up the old accusation that the Jews use Christian blood on Passover, the Rabbi, at the first possible moment, drags his beautiful wife Sara from the house, and flees with her, in terror of what would take place, up the Rhine, to take refuge in the Judengasse in Frankfurt.

The entire story is teeming with religious ecstasy, with stifled rage at racial oppression, with national aspirations and with a rare artistic abandon. The descriptions of the Passover ceremony and of the Frankfort Ghetto are very vivid and exceedingly beautiful. Nowhere is Heine so simple, direct and sincere; the events and characters are left to speak for themselves, without that obtrusion of the author's personality, the irony and the subjectivity, that he otherwise so rarely laid aside.

In this novel, Heine appears to be at the height of his Jewish consciousness and racial solidarity. As in the rest of his literary productions of this period, here too, the central motive is the suffering of the Jews at the hands of the bigoted Christians in marked contrast to their glorious past; and this Heine bitterly expresses through the words of the Rabbi: "Wie schlecht geschützt ist Israel! Falsche Freunde hüten seine Tore von aussen, und drinnen sind seine Hüter Narrheit und Furcht."²⁵

Throughout the entire romance Heine shows a profound knowledge and great understanding of the Ghetto life; but this is not surprising, since he actually experienced life in the Ghetto while in Frankfort and Hamburg. This also accounts for the deep sense of community with his people that was predominant in him throughout life; as he expressed it at the very beginning of this novel: "Je mehr aber der Hass sie von aussen bedrängte, desto inniger und traulicher wurde das häusliche Zusammenleben."²⁶

In addition to the Romance there is also a poetic preface which was sent by the poet to his friend Moser, and in which Heine's resentment is even more manifest:

"Brich aus in lauten Klagen
Du düstres Märtyrerlied,
Das ich so lang' getragen

25. Werke, Vol. 4, p. 248

26. Werke, p. 225. Vol 4.

Im flammenstillen Gemüt!"²⁷

While in the novel, as we have already pointed out, the personal element is shut out; and while its tone is more dignified, more checked and suppressed, in this poem on the contrary Heine gives full expression to his seething rage without the least bit of restraint. Here he very loudly gives utterance to his Judenschmerz and is carried away by emotion. In tone and extravagance of expression the poem bears a striking resemblance to "Lamentations."

10. Heine's Letters in Reference to his Conversion. Heine's letters form an indispensable source for the study of the poet's life and personality. They are natural, unadorned communications, not intended for publication, and so much the more valuable for that reason. They are now available in three large volumes edited by Friedrich Hirth, which contain 1,180 letters from and to Heine. The vast majority of these letters were written to his Jewish friends and on Jewish questions, and are for that reason of great value to us in this treatise.

Of these letters by far the most valuable to us are those written to Moser on the question of the poet's apostasy. They furnish the clue to the secret of Heine's complexity and account for the bitterness and biting irony that pervade all of his writings. The underlying

27. Werke, Vol. 1, p. 194.

cause of Heine's tragedy, we already pointed out, was that he could not adjust himself to his environment. Life to him was a long continuous struggle, full of disappointments and disillusion. All of his endeavors to establish himself on a firm material footing had failed; he had tried his hand in business; he had sought for a place in a Berlin high school; he had entertained the idea of practicing law in Hamburg, he aspired to a professorship in Munich, but all without success. But more than by all these reverses, more even than by the unhappy outcome of his love affair with Amalie, was the poet wrought up by his apostasy.

It is moving to see how bitterly he loathed the very thought of baptism, and how desperately he tried to put off its consummation. He recoiled from it not alone because of his love for Judaism, but even more so out of care for his own self-respect. He was forced into Christendom by sheer force of circumstances, and this he resented. Thus he writes to Moser long before his conversion: "Wie du denken kannst -- kommt hier die Taufe zur Sprache. Keiner von meiner Familie ist dagegen, ausser ich.....Aber dennoch halte ich es unter meiner Würde und meine Ehre befleckend, wenn ich, um ein Amt in Preussen anzunehmen, mich taufen liesse. Im lieben Preussen!!!"²⁸

He realized, moreover, his baptism would be for him an act not only of hypocrisy but also of treachery. It implied treachery to his brethren in Israel, treachery to his friends in the Verein für Kultur und Wissenschaft der Juden, and to the glorious past of Israel from which he could not break away. When he entered the university for the study of law, he well knew that it meant ultimate baptism, for no Jew in Germany at that time could be admitted to the bar, but at that time he was not yet conscious of his Jewishness. At that time he was still under the spell of his indifferent home environment, and thus thought of himself only as a German, not at all as a Jew. But he had experienced much since then. He had experienced already the Ghetto life of Hamburg and Frankfort; he had seen the misery of the Jews in Poland and Germany; and above all, during his months of affiliation with the Verein in Berlin had learned to feel a measure of pride in being a Jew. And now that he had to renounce his Jewishness, and proclaim himself at least in name a Christian, he felt outraged.

"Ich ~~weis~~s wirklich nicht, wie ich mir in meiner schlechten Lage helfen soll," he complains to Moser. "Ich werde noch aus Ärger Katholisch und hänge mich auf. Wir leben in einer traurigen Zeit, Schurken werden zu Besten, und die Besten müssen Schurken werden. Ich verstehe sehr

gut die Worte des Psalmisten: 'Herr Gott, gib mir mein täglich Brot, dass ich Deinen Namen nicht lästere.'"29

Heine put off the hateful act as long as was possible. Finally a month before his promotion to the degree of Doctor utrisque Juris he submitted to baptism in June, 1825, and this he regretted all the rest of his life. He felt that he had bargained away his soul for a mess of pottage and for this he could not forgive himself to the very end of his life. So he writes to Moser: "Ich stehe oft auf des Nachts und stelle mich vor den Spiegel und schimpfe mich aus."30

"The sense of his moral mercenary suicide," as Lady Magnus puts it, "in truth rarely left him,"31 and this is revealed in every line of his writings. To Moser he confesses that the step was taken from the lowest motives and for this he hated and despised himself. So he writes: "Ich ~~weis~~ nicht was ich sagen soll. Cohen versichert mich, Gans predige das Christentum und suche die Kinder Israel zu bekehren. Thut er dieses aus Ueberzeugung, so ist er ein Narr; thut er es aus Gleissnerei, so ist er ein Lump....dennoch gestehe ich, weit lieber wär's mir gewesen, wenn ich statt obiger Nachricht erfahren hätte, Gans habe silberne Löffel gestohlen.....Es wäre mir sehr leid, wenn

29. Werke, Vol. 8, p. 392.

30. Werke, Vol. 8, p. 468.

31. Magnus, p. 75.

mein eigenes Getauftsein dir in einem günstigen Lichte erscheinen könnte. Ich versichere dich, wenn die Gesetze das Stehlen silberner Löffel erlaubt hätten, so würde ich mich nicht getauft haben."³²

In addition to the loss of self-respect came his disappointment and chagrin at the non-success of his move, since he realized that it was not bringing him the material gain for which he had hoped. Instead, he felt himself an object of contempt among Christians and Jews alike. "Ich bin jetzt bei Christ und Jude verhasst," he writes. "Ich bereue sehr, dass ich mich getauft habe; ich seh noch gar nicht ein, dass es mir seitdem besser gegangen sei; im Gegenteil, ich habe seitdem nichts als Unglück."³³

He is so unhappy in consequence of this step that he earnestly desires to leave Germany. "Es ist aber ganz bestimmt, dass es mich sehnlichst drängt, dem deutschen Vaterland Valet zu sagen. Minder die Lust des Wanderns als die Qual persönlicher Verhältnisse (Z.B. der nie abzuwaschende Jude) treibt mich von hinnen."³⁴

In another letter to Moser, Heine includes the poem "Einem Abtrünnigen" which is directed against Eduard Gans as a result of the latter's baptism. The poem is written in a tone of bitterness, and is of great interest to us

32. Werke, Vol. 8, p. 458.

33. Werke, Vol. 8, p. 464.

34. Werke, Vol. 8, p. 477.

in that it also reveals the poet's own self-reproach,
as he concludes:

"Gestern noch ein Held gewesen,
Ist man heute schon ein Schurke."³⁵

35. Werke, Vol. 1, p. 195.

B. Motives of the Second Period, 1828-1844. The years immediately following his conversion, mark the beginning of the second stage of Heine's development, which may be designated as the period of his Weltschmerz. The tide of his Jewish interests wanes and turns. He is no more interested in the particular emancipation of the Jews, as he was during his Berliner Zeit; instead, he concentrates all his attention on the emancipation of all humanity. Proclaiming himself the Ritter von dem heiligen Geist, he now turns to writing on political and social themes, with the one great aim in mind, to free the world from its ills.

Heine, however, is not a representative of the cosmic Weltschmerz whose chief concern is the sad fate of all humanity, but rather of the egoistic type of Weltschmerz that originates from personal grief and unhappiness. He is more of the type of the introspective natures who are first and last aware of their own misery, and finally come to regard it as the representative of universal sorrow. Himself disappointed and disillusioned, and still smarting from the humiliating experience of his baptism, he thus feels a profound loathing for the established order, and so he comes to regard it as the cause not alone of his own suffering but of that of all mankind as well.

He hates the decadent nobility, he hates the self-satisfied Philistines, he hates the plebeian mob, and more

than all he hates the established church and the hypocritical clergy. All of these he holds responsible for the ills of society, and he thus sets out to break down their authority and to liberate the world from their evil influence. But he is not the constructive critic who has any remedy to offer for all existing evils, beyond mere ridicule and contempt, which is so characteristic of his works in general and of the writings of this period in particular.

With merciless irony he derides and ridicules all existing conventions of the time, and his biting sarcasm extends over all forms of society. He ridicules everybody and everything; there is nothing sacred for him. He pokes fun at the Prussian aristocracy; he laughs at the practical Philistine; he mocks the incredible stupidities of man; he exposes the hypocrisy of the clergy; he dallies and toys with the pet prejudices of the time, and he holds up a mirror to human nature as no one had done so skilfully since the days of Aristophanes. He is so much given to satire that he does not spare himself either, and very often makes himself the butt of his witty irony.

But underneath the cynicism and mockery one can easily discern a deep feeling of melancholy. Heine laughed not from joy but desperation. Most of the time he seems to have laughed only to hold back his tears. Isaac Goldberg

says: "Satire is often the twin sister of melancholy, and laughing is sometimes a bitter weeping. This is typical of the Jew. He is the born humorist even when his smiles must curl in the shadow of the gallows."³⁶ And this may well be said of Heine. He uses his laughter as a veil for his chagrin, preferring to laugh and have the world laugh with him, rather than to weep alone. Braun points out that Heine is too vain to appear as a sufferer -- "so he meets adversity not in a spirit of admirable courage, but in a spirit of bravado."³⁷

Life to him was a continuous and everlasting conflict. Ever he struggled to find a place for himself in the world, and always without success. As a Jew he was always and everywhere an outsider. Consequently life meant for him protest, as well, and the deafness of the world to protest made him cynical, bitter and sarcastic. This Heine himself expressed in the third volume of his Harzreise: "Und wenn Gift in mir ist, so ist es doch nur Gegengift, Gegengift wider jene Schlangen, die im Schutte der alten Dome und Burgen so bedrohlich lauern."³⁸

Moreover, his vexation that resulted from his failure to adjust himself to his environment, was at this time even more accentuated by a new inner conflict -- a conflict

36. Goldberg: Spirit of Yiddish Literature, p. 35.

37. Braun, p. 85.

38. Werke, Vol. 3, p. 116.

between Judaism and Hellenism. For, ever since his conversion, Hellenism became to him a new world of refuge where he is occasionally wont to escape from the world of stern reality to nurse his wounded soul. Hellenism is to him the symbol of beauty, of love and harmony. Christianity and Judaism, on the contrary, he considers the source of all evil, since both were directly responsible for his unhappiness and inner dissonance.

In his everlasting yearning for peace and harmony, Heine thus escapes into the realm of the Olympian Gods, and proclaims himself a pagan, an atheist and a sworn foe of all religions. But instead of peace and harmony, there now arose a new conflict. For Heine was only imagining himself a Greek. In reality, however, he was in spite of himself the ineffaceable Jew. This he realized later, and this is just why he is even more embittered against the Jews than against the Christians. For, in his everlasting attempt to escape from himself and from his people he always found himself just where he began. The very caustic remarks against the Jews, the contempt he felt for them, are at best a mere rationalization which is in popular language spoken of as the sour grape attitude. And this is characteristic of the writings of this period that we shall presently discuss.

1. Bäder von Lucca. The Bäder von Lucca was written

between the years 1829-1830 and is the most characteristic expression of the poet's atheism. It is written in a tone of irrepressible fun and laughing raillery. The entire work is aimed to ridicule all religions and especially the Jews of Hamburg.

From beginning to end this was a spiteful and merciless satire. Its main characters are two Jews: one a loud, vulgar, baptized millionaire from Hamburg who called himself Christophero de Gumpelino, and the other his squire Hirsch Hyazinth. Both are caricatures of some of the most unpleasing traits of the Jewish character, and in their persons and in their words he set out to ridicule all he disliked in the people to which they and he himself belonged. Indeed it seems as though in this book the poet tried to break his kinship with his people. But underneath his biting sarcasm and ribald humor one can easily detect Heine's bitter tears. "Herr Doctor, bleiben Sie mir weg mit der altjüdischen Religion, die wünsche ich nicht meinem Ärgsten Feind. Man hat nichts als Schimpf und Schande davon. Ich sage Ihnen, es ist gar keine Religion, sondern ein Unglück."³⁹ This is the central motive of this essay, and in this he gives expression to his bitterness that resulted from his unpleasant experiences as a Jew.

A similar expression of this feeling is given by the

39. Werke, Vol. 3, p. 295.

poet in the "Buch Le Grand," Chapter 2. "Mit dem Hebräischen ging es besser, denn ich hatte immer eine grosse Vorliebe für die Juden, obgleich sie, bis auf diese Stunde, meinen guten Namen kreuzigen."⁴⁰

In the eleventh chapter of the *Bäder von Lucca* Heine made his disastrous attack upon Count Platen which is one of the three things he most regretted in his life, the other two being the conversion and the book on Börne. However, what interests us mostly is not so much what he said about him as what instigated his attack. Platen attacked Heine not as a poet but as a Jew. This he did chiefly by recalling Heine's Jewish birth. "The Pindar of the little tribe of Benjamin," he called him, "the baptized Heine, the Pride of the Synagogue whose kisses smell of garlic." This was the most vulnerable spot in the poet, and for this he could not forgive his enemy.

To Varnhagen von Ense he wrote: "Als mich die Pfaffen in München zuerst angriffen und mir den Juden zuerst auf Tapet brachten, lachte ich -- ich hielt's für blosse Dummheit. Als ich aber System roch, als ich sah, wie das lächerliche Spukbild allmählich ein bedrohliches Vampyr wurde, als ich die Absicht der Platenschen Satire durchschaute, als ich durch Buchhändler von der Existenz ähnlicher Produkte hörte, die mit demselben Gift getränkt manuskriptlich herum-

krochen -- da gürtete ich meine Lende und schlug so scharf als möglich, so schnell als möglich."⁴¹

Heine later regretted his attack on Platen, but we can readily see why he did it. Heine tried to forget the humiliating experience of his conversion and Platen came and reminded him of it. This is what Heine himself very sarcastically remarked in his chapter on Platen.

"Vielleicht würde ich zum Besten des Grafen noch manchen anderen versteckten Witz hervorloben, doch da er mir in seinem König Oedipus das liebste angegriffen -- denn was könnte mir lieber sein als mein Christentum? -- so ist es mir nicht zu verdenken, wenn ich, menschlich gesinnt, den Oedipus, diese grosse That in Worten, minder ernstlich als die früheren Thätigkeiten würdige."⁴²

2. Aus den Memoiren des Herrn von Schnabelewopski. In this Heine appears to have reached the zenith of sensualism or Hellenism. It goes back to the early days of his arrival at Paris, and it reflects his enthusiasm over the life of his new Jerusalem as he called Paris. It is one of the liveliest and wittiest of his writings; it is the most frivolous and the most coarsely sensuous; and yet there are serious and melancholic tones in it all the same. The ever present pessimistic tone so characteristic of all of his writings, even in the most frivolous of his works, is felt

41. Bieber, p. 85.

42. Werke, Vol. 3, p. 335.

in this one too. This is especially true of his Flying Dutchman whom he calls "der ewiger Jude des Ozeans."

Though its main purpose was to ridicule the Frankfort Jews, it nevertheless betrays the deep feeling of sympathy that the poet cherishes in his heart for his fellow Jews. Through the words of little Simson, the central figure of this fragment, Heine gives expression to his inner feeling, and in ridiculing the little Jew, he really means to ridicule himself.

"Trotz dieser göttlichen Indifferenz, trotz diesem fast menschlichen Undank Gottes, blieb der kleine Simson doch der beständige Champion des Deismus und ich glaube, aus angeborener Neigung." Then again, "Die Juden sind immer die gehorsamsten Deisten, namentlich diejenigen, welche, wie der kleine Simson, in der freien Stadt Frankfurt geboren sind."⁴³ This, it must be remembered, Heine said in the most atheistic period of his life, and it only goes to show that in spite of all his utterances to the contrary, Heine was and remained all his life by nature religious and one of the bodyguards of Jehovah.

Another interesting thing about this fragment is the poet's glorification of the Bible. At the very height of his blasphemy and ridicule, he suddenly reverts to glorify the book which was to him the greatest ever written. So

43. Werke, Vol. 4, p. 300.

great, indeed, was the fascination that this book held out for him, and so great was the force that he derived from it, that there is hardly any of his writing that does not bear its influence either through direct quotations from it or through an imitation of its style. Again and again he alludes to it, and so here too he makes little Simson speak for him: "Das ist ein liebes Buch. Meine Vorfahren haben es in der ganzen Welt mit sich herumgetragen, und gar viel Kummer und Unglück und Schimpf und Hass dafür erduldet, oder sich gar dafür totschlagen lassen. Jedes Blatt darin hat Thränen und Blut gekostet, es ist das aufgeschriebene Vaterland der Kinder Gottes, es ist das heilige Erbe Jehovahs."⁴⁴

Such passages are of course typical of Heine, and we are not at all surprised to hear the author of the "Rabbi von Bacharach" and "Jehuda ben Halevy" utter such words of sympathy in behalf of his people. It is surprising, however, that the author should have chosen to express them in this particular book which is steeped with blasphemy and cynicism. This is indeed paradoxical, but not at all unexplainable. Heine, it was pointed out, was most of his life posing, and his mockery and cynicism very often served as a mask to cover up his inner feeling. But under this mask there was tenderness, love and sympathy. That is

44. Werke, Vol. 4, p. 314.

why he was even in this highly satirical writing capable of passing from mockery and ridicule to reverence and sympathy.

Indeed, in this very paradox we find the key to the secret of his character. The very fact that he was at this most frivolous mood capable of showing so much understanding for his race, shows him for what he was, though often in spite of himself, the ineffaceable Jew.

3. Shakespeare's Mädchen und Frauen. This essay was written in the year 1838, and is a study of the heroines of Shakespear's plays. However, by far the largest portion of it is devoted to a character analysis of the heroes of the Merchant of Venice. The leading motive of it is once again the protest against the maltreatment of the Jews in the Western world. Heine is fully convinced that the Merchant of Venice has turned out to be a tragedy of the oppressed rather than a comedy which Shakespeare aimed it to be.

In Shylock, the poet finds the best expression of the Jewish Familiengefühl. Shylock is to him a true representative of the Jewish father to whom the happiness of and devotion to his family stand above all other interests in life. He is the typical Jew to whom even money, wealth and power is of no value when the purity and chastity of his daughter are at stake.

"Nein," Heine says, "Shylock liebt zwar das Geld,

aber es gibt Dinge, die er noch weit mehr liebt, unter andern auch, seine Tochter, 'Jessika, mein Kind'.....Aus dem öffentlichen Leben, aus der Christlichen Societät zurückgedrängt in die enge Umfriedung häuslichen Glückes, blieben ja dem armen Juden nur die Familiengefühle, und diese treten bei ihm hervor mit der rührendsten Innigkeit."⁴⁵

For Jessika's act the poet finds no justification. She is to him not a representative of the typical Jewess but a mannstolle Evastochter. "Sie hat kein Gemüt," he says, "sondern abenteuerlichen Sinn."⁴⁶ About Shylock, however, he speaks with great sympathy and tenderness; in him he sees the embodiment of the age-long martyrdom of the Jewish people, and their self-sacrifice for the cause of Deism or die fixe Idee as he called it.

The entire essay is highly subjective. The treatment of the characters and especially that of Shylock is deeply colored with personal bias. But this only goes to show that Heine had always maintained a profound feeling of admiration for and sympathy with his people; and so, even at this time when he still posed as a Hellene, even in this most pagan of his moods, the feeling for solidarity with his people was nevertheless predominant in him.

4. Damascus-Briefe. During the months of May and July of the year 1840, Heine wrote a series of four articles

45. Werke, Vol. 4, p. 181.

46. Ibid, p. 182.

in connection with the famous blood accusation against the Jews of Damascus. These articles which are known as the "Damascus-Briefe," once more manifest the poet's Solidaritätsgefühl for his people and his devotion to their cause.

The Jews of Damascus were accused of having killed a certain Capuchin for ritual purposes, and although the charge was obviously unfounded, the Jews were nevertheless convicted and expelled from the city. Heine saw in this slanderous affair not only injustice to the Damascan Jews, but more than that, a terrible stain on the entire Jewish race; and he thus set out to expose the falsehood of these traditional anti-Jewish charges. In these articles, Heine shows the absurdity of the nature of the charges against the Jews. He accuses the civil authorities of Damascus of having joined hands with the Catholic clergy in fabricating the whole affair in order to make the expulsion of the Jews from the city possible.

Then he proceeds to criticize the French government for its indifferent attitude to the whole thing. He calls Thiers, who was at that time head of the French Republic a traitor to the cause of the French Revolution, because the latter had for political reasons not intervened with the Damascan authorities in behalf of the Jews of that city. Nor does the poet spare the Jews of France for

their indifference to the cause of their persecuted brethren. "Bei den französischen Juden wie bei den übrigen Franzosen ist das Gold der Gott des Tags," he says, "und die Industrie die herrschende Religion."⁴⁷

The whole series of these Damascus-Briefe, Heine signed with the Mogen David⁴⁸, the national emblem of the Jewish people. This undoubtedly marks the beginning of the poet's slow but gradual return to his people, and the reawakening of the Jewish national spirit in him.

5. The third chapter of the "Rabbi von Bacharach."
In the same year, 1840, Heine published his Rabbi von Bacharach, adding to it a third chapter to which he was undoubtedly instigated by the Damascus affair. The first two chapters have already been discussed (before.) But by way of comparison, it is worth noting that while the first two chapters manifest the Jewish national mood of the poet, the last one, on the other hand, reflects his pagan mood.

The Rabbi and Don Isaak Abarbanel, the two leading characters of this novel represent in the last chapter the two conflicting elements in Heine, that of spirit or Judaism and that of sensualism or Hellenism. The discussion that ensues at the meeting of the two is the central motive of the chapter and mirrors the inner conflict of the poet be-

47. Werke, Vol. 6, p. 250.

48. Mogen David means the shield of David and has the form of a six pointed star.

tween the two incompatible forces raging in him.

"Du lästerst, Isaak, den einzigen Gott," says the Rabbi, the Jew Heine, "du bist weit schlimmer als ein Christ, du bist ein Heide, ein Götzendiener."

"Ja, ich bin ein Heide, und ebenso zuwider wie die dürreren, freudlosen Hebräer sind mir die trüben, qualstüchtigen Nazarener,"⁴⁹ are the words of Abarbanel speaking for Heine, the Hellene, in reply to the Rabbi.

Such is the mood in which we find the poet during this period. But notwithstanding his outward Hellenic appearance, he is still cherishing in his heart a great love for his people. He is still capable of putting in the mouth of Sara such words of sympathy with his people that well remind us of the first chapter of the "Rabbi." This is what she says: "Edler Herr! Wenn Ihr mein Ritter sein wollt, so müsst Ihr gegen ganze Völker kämpfen, und in diesem Kampfe giebt es wenig Dank und noch weniger Ehre zu gewinnen! Und wenn Ihr gar meine Farben tragen wollt, so müsst Ihr gelbe Ringe auf Euren Mantel nähen oder eine Blaugestreifte Schärpe umbinden; denn dieses sind meine Farben, die Farben meines Hauses, des Hauses, welches Israel heisst, und sehr elend ist, und auf den Gassen verspottet wird von den Söhnen des Glücks."⁵⁰

And this is the Leitmotif of Heine's earlier works as well as of those of the very last years of his life, the time he made his final return to his people.

49. Werke, Vol. 4, p. 260

50. Werke, Vol. 4, p. 257.

C. Motives of the Last Period, 1844-1856. The year 1844 marks Heine's final return to his people, and the writings of this period clearly manifest the very same feeling of community with his people that was predominant in the "Rabbi von Bacharach" and in most of his other works of that period. He is no more the champion of liberty for all humanity that he was during the second stage of his development. He is no more the joyous Hellene, as he hitherto imagined himself, but once again the unhappy oversensitive and disappointed Jew, and as proud of his race and its glorious past, as he was during the Berliner Zeit. Moreover, he is now even a better Jew than he was at that time, for he now believes in a personal God; he is a believer in Jehovah, the God of his fathers.

"Ich bin kein göttlicher Bipede mehr," he says, "ich bin nicht mehr der freieste Deutsche nach Goethe, wie mich Ruge in gesündern Tagen genannt hat; ich bin nicht mehr der grosse Heide Nr. II, den man mit dem weinlaubumkränzten Dionysus verglich, während man meinem Kollegen Nr. I den Titel eines grossherzoglich weimarschen Jupiters erteilte; ich bin kein lebensfreudiger, etwas wohlbeleibter Hellene mehr, der auf trübsinnige Nazarener herablächelte -- ich bin jetzt nur ein armer todkranker Jude, ein abgezehrtes Bild des Jammers, ein unglücklicher Mensch."⁵¹

51. Bieber, p. 187.

Heine had completed the cycle of faith. Through Catholicism, paganism, atheism and Saint-Simonism, he had at last returned to his starting point. All his life he had tried to find for himself a place in the world, but not until the very last decade of his life was this brought about. Not ere he had undergone all the various disillusioning experiences in life did he find himself; and that, only for a short time, for he was already on the threshold of death. He had only twelve more years to live, and of these, the last eight years he spent as an invalid in his Matratzengruft, dying by degrees. His hands and feet decayed completely. His digestive organs were partially paralyzed, and he was almost entirely blind. Yet in spite of his inhuman physical suffering, the diseased, stricken, tortured man never ceased laboring.

Though his body was more dead than alive, his mental faculties remained unclouded and sound till the very end, and with an unbroken spirit, he has written much, and most of the best and maturest poetry. He now reached the final station, bent and twisted of body but with spirit straight and unbroken. He sang to the very last, and they were the songs of his spirit's homeland. Among the finest of his literary products of that period are the "Hebräische Melodien" and all the others of the Jewish motives, which we

shall presently discuss.

1. Denkschrift über Ludwig Marcus. The Denkwort on Marcus was written in the year 1844, and is of importance to us, in that the poet takes us back to the old days of his Berliner Zeit and to the time of his affiliation with the Verein für Kultur und Wissenschaft der Juden. He speaks with great love and respect of Marcus; he compares him with Mendelssohn. Especially interesting are the following words: "Aber von allen seinen Geistesexkursionen kam er immer gleichsam nach Hause zurück zu der Leidensgeschichte Israels, zu der Schädelstätte Jerusalems und zu dem kleinen Väterdialekt Palästinas."⁵² And this is just as true of Heine himself, for he always found the greatest delight in diverging from his theme and passing over to the subject of the martyrdom of Israel.

He then proceeds to attack Gans again for his conversion, as he says, "Da er die Rolle eines Agitators gespielt und bestimmte Präsidialpflichten übernommen hatte. Es ist hergebrachte Pflicht, dass der Kapitän immer der letzte sei, der das Schiff verlässt, wenn dasselbe scheitert -- Gans aber rettete sich selbst zuerst."⁵³

Heine feels justified in uttering such bitter words against his old friend, since he, about this time, made his final comeback to his people.

52. Bieber, p. 171.

53. Bieber, p. 175.

2. Nächtliche Fahrt. This is one of the most powerful poems of the last period. The entire poem is symbolic of the conflict between spirit and sensualism in the poet, and the final victory of the former. The poet appearing in the role of the Heiland hands over to the Marmorbild representing Diana, the symbol of sensualism, the bitter medicine of death.

The setting of the poem is the same as that of the scene of the moon-night at the Rhine at the time the Rabbi von Bacharach fled to Frankfort. There the fugitive cast the silver cup "schollernd ins meer;" in this poem schollert hinab ins meer "die arme Schönheit." There, again, the wife of the Rabbi cried in despair Schaddei voller Gnade, and here the Heiland calls out in prayer:

"O Steh mir bei, barmherziger Gott!

Barmherziger Gott Schaddei!

Da schollert's hinab ins Meer -- O weh --

Schaddei!⁵⁴ Schaddei Adonai!"⁵⁵

3. Biblical Motives. To this period belong also the shorter Biblical motives: König David, Die Goldene Kalb, Salomo, Adam and Halleluja. They are of minor literary importance, and hardly merit individual detailed discussion. As a group, however, they are valuable as showing once more the poet's almost pathological affinity for the Bible. In-

54. Schaddei, meaning in Hebrew Almighty.

55. Werke, Vol. 2, p. 307.

deed, so great was the force he derived from it, that there is hardly any poem or work in prose that does not in one form or another betray its influence; and not alone in the works of this last period is its influence felt, but even in the most frivolous of his moods, we find him constantly drawing on it.

All of his works are simply replete with direct quotations of the Bible, with Biblical metaphors, synonyms, and striking figures of speech. His love songs, breathe with the spirit of the Song of Songs; in his exulting moods, he freely employs complete passages of the Psalms, while in his more pessimistic poems, we distinctly feel the undertone of Koheleth. His "Salomo", for example, is nothing more than a poetic rendering of the third chapter of the Song of Songs. The concluding lines of his "Morphine":

"Gut ist der Schlaf, der Tod ist besser -- freilich.

Das Beste wäre, nie geboren sein,"⁵⁶

merely express the same pessimistic idea that is expressed in the second chapter of Koheleth.

Or, when we take the first stanza of "Halleluja":

"Am Himmel Sonn' und Mond und Stern',

Sie zeugen von der Macht des Herrn.

Und schaut des Frommen Aug' nach oben,

Den Schöpfer wird es preisen loben,"⁵⁷

56. Werke, Vol. 2, p. 370.

57. Werke, Vol. 2, p. 557.

we notice a striking resemblance to the opening verses of Psalm 19.

But there is still another phase of his poetry, that manifests the Biblical influence, and that is personifying nature, and endowing inanimate objects with human emotions. Some critics are wont to attribute this peculiarity of the poet to the Romantic influence, but this can hardly be the case. For when we compare such poems of Heine with Goethe's or Uhland's nature poems, we find that while Goethe or Uhland or Mörike read out of nature and out of life what these phenomena in themselves contain, Heine on the other hand reads into them what he wishes them to say. And this is just what we find in the poetry of the Bible. Heine makes the trees sing, and the flowers whisper and the palms long, and this is characteristic of the Bible in its treatment of natural phenomena.

This is true not alone of his nature poems in general; even in those dealing with Greek mythology, the Biblical element is noticed. Even in such poems as his "Apollougott" or his "Diana" the setting is more of the Orient than of Greece, and the extravagance of expression is more of the Bible. This of course brings us back to what we have already pointed out elsewhere that Heine was only imagining himself a Greek, but in reality he always remained the emotional and sensuous Oriental.

Untermeyer says: "Heine was never as he often and fondly thought of himself, a Greek. He was not that fictional creature, an Hellenic Jew. Heine imagined he was a joyous Hellene, because he recaptured something of that strange mixture of aestheticism and Homeric splendor, because he sang in a worldly and mechanical age of Aphrodite, nightingales and a defiant paganism; because he addressed his literary prayers to Apollo rather than to Jehovah.... These things of course made him no more truly Greek than the putting on of a toga would have made him a Roman. Compare, for instance, his familiar, rude and altogether human manner of treating the deities (in the North Sea) with the way they are treated by a truly Hellenic poet like Landor. And every chapter, every line of his poetry shows him for what he was: the unusually emotional and quick-tempered Oriental."⁵⁸

Untermeyer's observations are undoubtedly true, especially since Heine had himself admitted this not only in the writings of the last period but even while in his most sensuous moods. In *Atta Troll*, for example, in comparing Diana with Herodias, he says:

"Denn ich liebe dich am meisten!

Mehr als jene Griechengöttin,

Mehr als jene Fee des Nordens,

58. Untermeyer, Preface, p. viii.

Lieb' ich dich, du tote Jüdin!⁵⁹

Again in his Nachwort zum Romanzero he says: "Auch schaute die Göttin (Milo) mitleidig auf mich herab, doch zugleich so trostlos, als wollte sie sagen; siehst du denn nicht, dass ich keine Arme habe und also nicht helfen kann?"⁶⁰

4. Hebräische Melodien. The highest expression of Heine's Jewish mood is to be found in his "Hebräische Melodien," consisting of "Prinzessin Sabbat," "Jehuda ben Halevy" and "Disputation," perhaps the finest and most exquisite of all of his poetic works. Hardly any of his writings, with the exception of the "Rabbi von Bacharach," reveals the poet's enthusiasm for the history of his race so strongly as the "Prinzessin Sabbat" and "Jehuda ben Halevy." Nowhere is he so direct in appeal and so outspoken in his sympathies as he is in these. Nowhere had he expressed so clearly and more touchingly what he felt and hoped for his people than in these poems.

a. Prinzessin Sabbat. In this poem Heine presents to us Israel as an enchanted Prince, who lives the whole week through in his shape of a dog, but ever on the Sabbath eve regains the dignity of human form, and with uplifted head and heart is wedded to Princess Sabbath. The festal day moves on in a calm world of ceremonial and traditional joys, but with the approach of evening the hour of bewitch-

59. Werke, Vol. 2, p. 157.

60. Werke, Vol. 2, p. 261.

ment draws near, when the Prince, after receiving from the hands of the Princess one last parting cup, will again suffer his hated metamorphosis.

The leading motive underlying this poetic allegory is the tragic contrast between the inner wealth and external humiliation of the life of the Jew, which Heine expresses in the following stanzas:

"Lecho Daudi Likras Kalle --
Komm, Geliebter, deiner harret
Schon die Braut, die dir entschleiert
Ihr verschämtes Angesicht!
In dem Liede wird gefeiert
Die Vermählung Israels
Mit der Frau Prinzessin Sabbath,
Die man nennt die stille Fürstin."⁶¹

In these lines we see Israel as the Prince; but this lasts only one day, and then comes the climax in the closing lines:

"Es kredenzt die Prinzessin
Auch den Abschiedstrunk dem Prinzen --
Hastig trinkt er, und im Becher
Bleiben wen'ge Tropfen nur."⁶²

And from now the dog-life of the Jew begins anew.

b. Jehuda ben Halevy. Jehuda ben Halevy, the sweet

61. Werke, Vol. 2, p. 384.

62. Werke, Vol. 2, p. 386.

Jewish singer of the Middle Ages had always exercised a great fascination for Heine; and in this picturesque poem he sings of him not merely with great emotion, but with all the pain of the "two thousand years' tragedy" of the Jews at his heart. Jehuda ben Halevy who in his old age, overcome by longing, made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem and there died, is Heine's great prototype and became for him a symbol of his own hereditary longing for the home and religion of his fathers.

Thus Heine begins the poem with the well known Psalm:

"Lechzend klebe mir die Zunge
An dem Gaumen, und es welke
Meine rechte Hand, vergäss' ich
Jemals dein, Jerusalem --"63

which is so symbolic of the Jew's everlasting yearning for Palestine. Then he goes on depicting a long procession of ghostly bearded figures among whom he recognizes the great poet who with his song went before the suffering caravan of Israel, in the desert of their exile, like a singing pillar of fire. So he says:

"Ja, er ward ein grosser Dichter,
Stern und Fackel seiner Zeit,
Seines Volkes Licht und Leuchte,
Eine wunderbare, grosse

63. Werke, Vol. 2, p. 387.

Feuersäule des Gesanges,
Die der Schmerzenskarawane
Israels vorangezogen
In der Wüste des Exils."⁶⁴

The whole poem, though only a fragment is nevertheless compact with such a wealth of material pertaining to Jewish life, that it is impossible to point to one single motive underlying it. It is indeed a combination of a great many motives, all interwoven and blended into one poetic pattern. More than that, it is a kaleidoscope of moods, of Stimmungen, of philosophic observations, of prophecies, of pathetic outcries whereby Jewish life in all its phases is mirrored. Indeed, there is no better testimony of the reawakened Judengefühl in Heine than this poem; to put it in Lady Magnus' words: "Jehuda Halevy, whose love for the mistress, the Herzensdame, whose name was Jerusalem, is sung with a sympathy and intensity impossible to one who had not felt a like passion."⁶⁵

c. Disputation. In marked contrast to Jehuda ben Halevy, stands Heine's "Disputation" the concluding poem of the "Hebräische Melodien." For while the former is unsurpassed for its great poetic power, deep sincerity and seriousness of tone, the latter on the contrary is of a more frivolous nature and steeped with irony and gross

64. Werke, Vol. 2, p. 391.

65. Lady Magnus, p. 74.

humor. In this poem, Heine gives a description of a dispute between a Catholic priest and a rabbi as to the merits of their respective religions.

The chief purpose of the poem, as in all other satires of this kind, was to ridicule the clergy of both creeds alike, and to show their stupidities and narrow mindedness. But notwithstanding his supreme disregard for doctrinal religion, there are in the poem very serious passages nevertheless, which betray the poet's religiosity of nature and his belief in the supreme power of Jehovah. Passing over suddenly from a tone of mockery to a tone of awe and reverence, Heine assumes an air of a Psalmist and exclaims:

"Unser Gott ist stark. In Händen
Trägt er Sonne, Mond, Gestirne,
Throne brechen, Völker schwinden
Wenn er runzelt seine Stirne.
Und er ist ein grosser Gott.
David singt: Ermessen liesse
Sich die Grösse nicht -- die Erde
Sei der Schemel seiner Füsse."⁶⁶

This poem is moreover of value as showing once more the great fervor displayed by the poet in the use of Jewish folklore. As the former two poems, this is also interwoven and interspersed with Biblical allusions,

66. Werke, Vol. 2, p. 423.

with Jewish folktales and with Talmudic lore. And this in turn shows how organically Heine was attached to his race and its heritage.

III. Conclusion.

"Die Wechselwirkung äusserer Begebenheiten und innerer Seelenereignisse," Heine said in his Memoirs, "offenbart Ihnen die Signatura meines Seins und Wesens."⁶⁷ And this is exactly the impression one gets of him after a perusal of the Jewish motives that pervade his works. It is the interaction of the German environment and of his inherent Jewish traits that shaped and moulded Heine's character; and it is these that furnish us a clue to the understanding of the complexity of his nature. Whatever he said and did and wrote is the outcome of these two influences.

It was Heine's ill fate to be born a Jew in an enslaved country and half a century too soon. Worse still to have inherited the pride of Israel, to realize the frightful accumulations of her wrong, her untold misery, her long despair, her undying hope. But worst of all to have sold his soul for a mess of pottage; for if indeed there was anything that made his life most miserable, it certainly was his apostasy. He never lost the sickening sense of his humiliation, and this is betrayed in every line of his Jewish themes.

Whatever inconsistencies there were in his views and in his actions, they were due to these facts. Heine was a Jew in Germany, a German in France, a Jew among

67. Werke, Vol. 7, p. 376.

Christians and a convert recognized by neither and despised by all. It is little wonder that such a man never made of his life a thing of harmony, never succeeded in resolving the inherent dissonances of his nature, or attaining a serene mastery of his own fate. All his life he tried to harmonize the conflicting elements in himself, but without success. And it is this failure that has made him oversensitive, self-centered and sarcastic. It is the failure to find for himself a place in the world that brought out the negative rather than the positive side of his nature, and this is just why he was so little understood.

Through his own personal disillusioning experiences as a Jew, Heine was made more conscious of the tragedy of his race, and it is the accumulated bitterness of centuries that we find expressed in his "Rabbi von Bacharach" and "Jehuda ben Halevy" and the rest of his Jewish themes. It was the tragedy of his life to be a Jew thrust back by Metternich into a circle of the medieval Inferno, and therefore deprived of his country too. But throughout all his suffering, physical and intellectual, he never completely let go the vision revealed to Jehuda ben Halevy of the peace and healing of Jerusalem.

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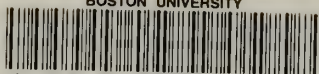
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